

*Extract original of flash
while the war is hot.*

21 March 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Suggested Outline for Paper Responding to Secretary
Laird's Request for Net Assessment of DRV/RVNAF Forces

1. We envisage a paper in two parts: (a) the main memorandum, about 20 pages in length, and (b) annexes giving all the facts and figures we can muster in the time allowed to us. (The deadline for the finished product is 15 April 1972.)

2. The main memorandum would include the following sections.

(a) Summary (two pages or so).

(b) Introductory statement explaining that the main question we are trying to answer is whether or not the RVNAF will be able to continue the war largely on its own after this year. Indicate that we assume (1) no negotiated settlement, (2) a continuing basic stability of the present governments in both SVN and NVN, (3) no changes of the situation in Laos or Cambodia of such magnitude as to induce either SVN or NVN to quit the war, and (4) a continuation of outside aid to both SVN and NVN at roughly present levels. We also assume a continuing, though diminishing, U.S. air and naval air combat role.

(c) Comparison of quantitative strengths as of 1 January 1972 and 1 January 1973 for RVNAF and DRV forces. This will get us into the old numbers game on both main and local forces, but at least we don't have to coordinate with anybody. In annex, we should back this up, if possible, with more detailed tables of enemy strength in and targetted against each MR of South Vietnam, compared with RVNAF strength in each MR plus JGS reserve. Should also have tables of NVA strengths targetted against Cambodia and Laos. Finally, there should be separate tables on VNAF and DRV Air Forces, and on North and South Vietnamese navies, if possible.

(d) Qualitative discussion of the leadership, morale, training, and equipment of the forces of both sides.

*Can they make it
this year?*

*Continued deterioration
on DRV to seek military
solution.*

*Separate
assumption*

*Logistics must
be discussed*

*intelligence
will
be discussed
in case
of an air
US are all air
out of*

*strategy
"limited offensive"*

*Also logistics
are a question*

*Also use
an
close*

In annex, we should include whatever tables can be worked up on comparative equipment, length of training, ratings of ARVN officers, desertion rates, etc. Might be useful to include a discussion of desertion as a problem for both ARVN and NVA.

- (e) Evaluation of RVNAF's ability, on the basis of the above factors, to carry on on its own after this year. Emphasizing that this is our best judgment, point out that a very big unknown is the future level of Soviet and Chinese aid to NVN. Then go on to discuss each of the questions on page 2 of General Pursley's memorandum, all of which are related to the level of Soviet and Chinese aid.

- (f) Conclusion (about a page)